

School Committee Meeting Minutes
Shirley Middle School
April 6, 2004

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson
Paul Wilson
Gary Bourassa
Hugh Muffoletto
Bob Prescott

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent
Patricia Stern, Business Manager
Tom Walsh, SPED director
Lonnie Ouellette, Early Learning Director
Sylvia Jordan, Middle School Principal

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Public Participation:

Rod Genet, candidate for State Senate in the Middlesex and Worcester district, introduced himself. He stated that he is a member of the Westborough school committee and would be available to answer any questions anyone might have. He also stated that he was present so that he can learn what needs there are in Shirley.

Business Affairs:

Patricia Stern reviewed payables warrants 443 and 444. These warrants were for \$297,834.20 and \$81,852.11, respectively.

The financial statement that was scheduled for review would not be available. Mrs. Stern stated that due to the short time frame between meetings there was not ample time to prepare the document.

Before the committee moved forward to discuss the FY05 budget, line by line, committee members offered brief general comments on the subject. Mr. Parker stated that this is a very difficult process for everyone. In response to a middle school parent newsletter item Mr. Parker wanted to clarify that no final decisions have been made regarding the budget and he does not consider this budget to be a "school committee budget". Mr. Bourassa would like to limit all non-union staff to a 3% salary increase. He would also like to maintain the Spanish program at the elementary and middle school levels. Mr. Muffoletto agrees that Spanish should continue at the elementary level and be optional for the middle school students. Dr. Scott stated that this subject of salary increases should be discussed in executive session, as it is a negotiated item.

Mr. Wilson commented that he had several ideas on items that weren't necessarily school items: offering a consumer driven health plan and flexible spending accounts. He also commented that he would like to look at the SPED budget to see if there is any way to save money there. He is still reviewing the issues related to maintaining or closing the Devens & Center Schools. Mr. Prescott stated that he has prioritized some areas that he would like to continue, namely the Wilson Reading program. He would also like to be sure that the committee weigh the overall effects that any cut would have on the students. In an effort to inform the community that half of the school budget increase is from the SPED program, Mr. Muffoletto would like the committee to consider how to make separate line items for SPED.

FY05 Budget Review

The committee moved forward to discuss the budget, line by line. The following are those line items that resulted in motions:

- School Committee - \$260 in postage was restored to the budget for mailing of school committee packet information. Mr. Parker motioned for approval. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion; the motion was approved.
- Speech Assistant – Mr. Parker motioned to delete speech assistant position. Mr. Bourassa seconded. Mr. Parker withdrew his motion as IEP's could require the need for the position thereby negating this motion.
- Extraordinary Maintenance – Mr. Bourassa motioned to allot \$30,000 for district wide use. Mr. Prescott seconded the motion; motion approved.

The committee took a seven-minute break at 8:25. Once the meeting resumed no public participation was allowed in an effort to move through the budget quickly and efficiently.

Bus user fees were briefly discussed. Mr. Muffoletto motioned to approve transportation fees at \$180 per child, family maximum of \$300. Mr. Bourassa seconded the motion. A vote on the motion was delayed pending review of anticipated cost savings associated with the fees.

Instrumental music and band fees and athletic fees were both briefly discussed. Motions were made to table these items until further review. The Annual Town Meeting items were also discussed. Mr. Muffoletto motioned to table this item until after salary issues were reviewed in Executive Session. Motion was seconded and approved.

Dr. Scott asked that a letter be signed by committee members for Senator Resor and Representative Eldridge. This letter would address concerns about the budget and ask them to support funding the Circuit Breaker at the 75% level. If funded at the state level a huge burden would be eliminated from the school district. Mr. Bourassa motioned to approve the letter. Mr. Prescott seconded; motion was approved.

The committee moved on to discuss the special education classroom at Shirley Middle School. Dr. Scott stated that the program would cost the district \$120,000 but would result in a savings of \$158,000 in out of district placement costs for SPED. Hiring teachers would be placed on hold until we had children signed up for the program. Mr.

Prescott asked that an amendment be added requiring at least three children come back to the Shirley school system before the program could begin. Mr. Muffoletto seconded the motion. Mr. Parker voted “No” to approving the motion, all other members voted “Yes”.

Correspondence and Information:

Dr. Scott briefly discussed the following items:

- Auditorium donation of \$1000
- Open House thank you note regarding a helpful tour guide
- Rotary meeting planned for May 13 at Shirley Middle School
- SPED summary sheet and out-of-district placement update
- Historical view of major budget summaries
- Current enrollment update: 762 students; 34 from Devens; 82 school choice in to Shirley; approximately 95 school choice out of district
- LAW math club, run by Suzanne Mahoney, will be offered again
- Accreditation representative will be at the next meeting on April 27 to answer questions

Patricia Stern also provided and reviewed a budget summary. The summary included \$774,000 received from state, federal and revolving grants of which \$591,000 comes from state grants. If the state grant money does not come through, those programs and additional items in the budget would be in jeopardy. Mr. Muffoletto suggested that if an override is necessary a stipulation should be included stating that if the school district is to receive more money than was projected in the budget any additional monies received would go back to the town to reduce the override debt.

Mr. Parker stated that the Devens School is still a major issue as far as the school committee is concerned. These issues will be discussed at the next meeting, April 27. Mr. Muffoletto suggested that another meeting be held prior to the April 27 meeting as many budget items were tabled at this meeting. In addition, FinCom was told that they would have an answer by the end of the month regarding the budget. It was agreed that a meeting will be held on April 12 at 6p.m. in the Town Offices. The committee will then meet with the Board of Selectmen.

At 9:25 p.m. the committee was polled to go into Executive Session to discuss negotiations. Roll Call: Don Parker – Yes

Hugh Muffoletto – Yes

Paul Wilson – Yes

Bob Prescott – Yes

Gary Bourassa – Yes

A five minute recess was held prior to Executive Session.

The school committee came back to public session and adjourned the meeting at 11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Karen Gutheil